The McNeill Rangers: A Study In Confederate Guerrilla Warfare

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I

Hardy County in the Civil War

The County of Hardy, located in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, was formed in 1786 from Hampshire County. Possessing an area of 700 square miles and a population in 1860 of 9,864, Hardy County was one of the constantly disputed sections of western Virginia during the Civil War.[1]

Through this county flows the South Branch of the Potomac River with its surrounding magnificent valley. In all West Virginia, one cannot find a more beautiful or interesting section than the South Branch Valley. Several miles wide, "the Valley", as it is commonly called, contains lands whose fertility lends itself to successful farming. Agriculture and stock raising have always been the main source of employment in this area, with corn, wheat, apples, peaches, melons, cattle and poultry having important interests. Truck-farming has a vital role, each household possessing its own small garden.

On either side of the Valley are high mountains with rough terrain and heavy timber. Throughout the area wild-life is plentiful, and hunting has always been a major diversion and source of meat supply. In the winter snows are whipped by winds of gale force, and snowdrifts are usually numerous.

The South Branch River is a clear stream, quite wide, and of considerable depth in many places. Watering the Valley, the river abounds in fish and creates many picturesque settings. At times the usually calm waters surge from low banks and spread over the Valley, enveloping and ravishing the rich surrounding lands. The river has a peculiar feature in the field of geology as it flows through the Valley. At one point the river, thousands of years ago, did not cut across the mountains from one side to the other, but made a passage through

[1] Hu Maxwell and H. L. Swisher, *History of Hampshire County*, (Morgantown, 1897), p. 62.

them from end to end. This geological exception is now in the form of a narrow, trough-like gap, about seven miles long, and appropriately called "the Trough". At the present day, the gorge is several hundred feet deep, and the South Branch flows in a narrow channel at the bottom, with almost perpendicular walls of rock on either side.

In the very center of the South Branch Valley, surrounded by high mountains, and located on the east side of the junction of the Moorefield River and the South Branch of the Potomac, is Moorefield, the county seat of Hardy County. A quiet farming center in 1860, the population of the Moorefield area at that time was about 1,500.[2] At this period there were no bridges at Moorefield, and the South Branch had to be forded some three miles up the Valley, or the ferryboat, which was usually busy, had to be used. The main towns that communicated with Moorefield were Petersburg, Romney, and New Creek, the latter having a stage line between the two points.[3]

In 1860, the socially dominant element in the Valley was a class of small and large slave-owning, grain-producing farmers whose outlook on life and politics was that of the typical Southern planter. The proslavery views of this class were reinforced by the fact that many of the leading families came from the Shenandoah Valley, and were "Old Dominion Democrats."[4] The geography of the Valley also tended to strengthen proslavery tendencies, since the rich soil lent itself handily to the establishment of large farms or plantations which depended on cheap labor for successful operation. In the Valley there were certain farms, each having thousands of acres and employing scores of slaves. Slavery was thus not only socially congenial to a large element of the population, but economically expedient as well.

On the other hand, some of the leading inhabitants came from the western areas of Maryland and Pennsylvania, while a few of the most prosperous families were immigrants from New Jersey and New England. This segment of the governing class of the Valley was definitely antislavery, although some

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[2] Interview, Mrs. Carrie Carskaden and Mrs. Ann Harness, Keyser, West Virginia.

[3] Interview, Mr. S. M. Bright, Keyser, West Virginia. New Creek is now Keyser.

[4] Charles Henry Ambler, West Virginia, The Mountain State, (New York, 1940), p. 388.

owned slaves, but it was clearly a minority in numbers and influence. Some of this group were former Northern Democrats or had been affiliated with the old Whig group. Many were now disciples of the new Republican Party.

The majority of the settlers in the Valley in 1860 were small farmers owning a few, or no slaves. This group was either proslavery or maintained an air of indifference toward the slavery issue. This indifference seldom extended to the holding of abolition principles, however. In numbers this class exceeded greatly the large farm owners. Vigorous and independent, the settler of 1860 in the Valley possessed the intrinsic qualities of individualism as much as any frontiersman Frederick Jackson Turner ever wrote about.

In 1860, it may be said in conclusion, the agricultural South Branch Valley was a thriving proslavery section, peopled by a sturdy race of individualistic qualities. Economic, political, and social standards mostly favored slavery, but an embryo abolitionist element was present. Soon the South Branch Valley was to be torn by strife father against son, brother against brother, in many instances, as the Civil War burst upon the nation.

II

The Early Life of John Hanson McNeill

The name of Captain John Hanson McNeill and the McNeill Rangers is always a welcome subject for discussion in the South Branch Valley or its vicinity. When men gather at their favorite rendezvous, the exploits of John Hanson McNeill invariably are told and retold. Women in their kitchens, or at social gatherings relate with pride how their father or grandfather fought the Civil War as a member of the McNeill Rangers. Children, needless to say, listen with awe to these tales, more colorful than the contents of books of fiction.

Legend portrays every man of the McNeill Rangers as a hero. Undoubtedly these Confederate guerrillas frequently struck terror into the hearts of Federal commanders by their sudden visitations, often made in the deep of night. Sustaining many casualties, they suffered more than the regulars of either the Confederate or Federal army since their medical supplies were extremely meager. They endured innumerable hardships, but

constant in their devotion to their political and social philosophy, they fought for the Confederate cause to the last.

The leader of this daring company of fighters was a brave, sharp-witted, kindhearted man in his late forties when he assumed command. His education consisted of the limited schooling given to the average Valley youngster. John Hanson McNeill was born June 12, 1815, a short distance from the present day Moorefield, Hardy County, West Virginia.[5]

Undoubtedly, John Hanson McNeill's father never thought his son would achieve such fame and distinction as that which the Civil War was to cast upon him and his McNeill Rangers.

The father, John McNeill, had emigrated from Scotland to America in 1722, and married one Elizabeth McNealus. From this union three sons were born, David, John, and William. David and John settled in that part of Frederick County, Virginia, which later became Hardy County, West Virginia.[6]

David McNeill, the eldest of the three sons, had at least two children, Strother and Daniel, Junior. The latter was an ambitious, energetic individual and at his death had attained a large estate in western Virginia, possessing many slaves and thousands of acres of fertile soil.[7] Strother McNeill was born June 22, 1773. He was twice married, the first union with Mary Ann Renick producing five children. His second marriage was to Amy Pugh, and from this union six children resulted. These six children were John Hanson, Hannibal, Kitty, Margaret Ann, Adaline and George. With the exception of John Hanson and George, none of the children lived past the age of fifteen. Strother lived the life of a moderately well-to-do farmer, possessing some of the rich South Branch Valley land and a few slaves. In the latter part of 1819, Strother McNeill died.[8]

John Hanson McNeill, mild-tempered and industrious, grew up in the proslavery Valley and early became interested in cattle raising. Possessing a few slaves and a small farm, John Hanson succeeded in his chosen field from the start. Shorthorn cattle were his pride and joy, but he continually longed for more and cheaper land.[9]

[5] Genealogical notes of Mrs. J. D. Chipley, Moorefield, West Virginia.
[6] Interview, Mrs. J. D. Chipley.
[7] Will of Daniel McNeill, Daniel McNeill Papers, West Virginia University Library, Morgantown, West Virginia.
[8] Interview, Mrs. J. D. Chipley.
[9] Interview, Mr. Paul Frost McNeill, Moorefield, West Virginia.

In 1837, he married Jemima Cunningham and within a year the ambitious McNeill had moved to Kentucky.[10] Not satisfied there, the McNeills returned to western Virginia in five or six years. Back in familiar surroundings, John Hanson spent several years consolidating his holdings and raising a family.[11]

In 1848, the desire for more land caused him to move, with his wife, four children, and a large family of Negro slaves, to Boone County, Missouri. Here they settled three miles south of Columbia, living in an old brick house known as the Johnson Place.[12] Before long John Hanson McNeill, through his hard work and good fortune, had achieved a prominent position in the agricultural life of Boone County. "Here he became one of the best farmers of the county, a breeder and successful exhibitor of Shorthorn cattle, winning many premiums in the old Boone County Fair every year. He replenished his herd with the finest stock that he could find in Kentucky and Ohio, and continued to win blue ribbons and silver cups in the various county and state fairs." [13]

However, by the year 1855, for reasons not known to posterity, this prosperous farmer moved his family to Daviess County, Missouri, where he bought a 300-acre farm and continued to be a practical farmer and exhibitor of Shorthorn cattle.[14]

III

Fighting the Civil War in Missouri

In April, 1861, with the firing on Fort Sumter, the War between the States erupted and spread with great rapidity. Missouri soon felt the split, and also became divided. Governor Jackson, pro-Confederate governor of Missouri, commissioned John Hanson McNeill to raise a company of militia and join General Price.[15] Taking three sons with him, the elder McNeill gathered a group of Southern sympathizers together and joined Price.

A slaveholder and a staunch Democrat, it was almost inevitable that John Hanson McNeill should offer his sword to the

[10] W. B. Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," The Missouri Historical Review, Vol. XI, p. 402.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 403.

Confederate cause. Then, too, the offer to form a company and be an officer in the potentially successful army of the new nation must have also influenced his decision. Whatever the reason, or reasons, John Hanson McNeill decided to cast his lot with the South. He was destined to become one of its foremost guerrilla leaders.[16]

With Price's army, Captain McNeill fought at the battles of Carthage, Wilson's Creek, and then at Lexington.[17] At the latter battle, Captain McNeill was badly wounded and carried off the field in the same carriage that conveyed Colonel Nulligan, the Federal commander, who had surrendered to General Price. This battle was a costly one for the Captain in another way. His second son, George, was shot and killed and left on the battlefield. Today a small headstone marks his grass-covered grave. Following this battle the oldest son, William, returned home to his family to aid in the menial chores of the farm. Jesse McNeill and his wounded father started south with Price's army, but had to fall behind and stop at Noocho for the wounds to heal. Recuperation and a furlough followed for the two McNeills. They spent some time with relatives near Arrow Rock in Saline County. Then they went to Boone County, Missouri to visit old friends. Now the entire family was reunited, including John Hanson McNeill's personal servant, "Uncle Sam."[18] Sam was a faithful old slave who insisted on accompanying his master to the army, though he had two wives at home. "Uncle Sam" would constantly say that he "could get another wife but might never get another good master."[19]

Soon Jesse and his father were expecting to rejoin Price's army in southern Missouri. However, while visiting Mrs. McNeill's brother, David B. Cunningham, in the lower part of Boone County, they were surprised one morning about daybreak to find the house surrounded and teeming with Federal soldiers. A large squad of General Merrill's Horse Guard had descended upon the area. The Confederate Captain and his son, Jesse, were captured without a struggle, sent to Columbia, Missouri, and imprisoned in the old university, then being used

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[16] Interview, Mrs. Carrie Carskadon, Mrs. Lena Hutson, and Dr. L. H. Hutson, Fellowtown, West Virginia.
[17] Faulkner, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 426.
[18] Ibid., p. 408.
[19] Ibid.

as a Federal prison.[20] The following depicts their treatment there:

> Fortunately for them some of their old friends in Columbia were strong Union men, Col. Wm. F. Switzler among them, and through his influence they were treated with great leniency and paroled so that they could visit friends in town, but return to prison at night. They observed their parole with scrupulous honor and the limits were soon extended to ten miles in the country . . . and on one occasion Jesse was allowed to go back down to the south end of the county to visit his aunt and Uncle David Cunningham; and on his return traded General Merrill a mule for the horse that had been taken with him when first captured; and he became quite a friend of the Federal officer.[21]

An amusing incident transpired when a group of Confederate ladies obtained consent from General Merrill to make Captain McNeill a new suit of clothes. Soon the Captain was traversing the streets of Columbia in a handsome new Confederate uniform, unmolested by the hundreds of Federal soldiers in the town. So great was the confidence reposed in the Captain that Colonel Switzler told General Merrill: "Let him go anywhere in the county and I guarantee he will return when he promises to do so."[22] Captain John Hanson McNeill never broke the trust of these officers. In fact, as Jesse declared after the war, their imprisonment "was more like an extended visit among friends than an enforced confinement."[23]

After some two months of this tranquil life, the order came for them to be transferred to the Federal prison in St. Louis. Upon their arrival there, they were confined in an old slave market, commonly known as "Lynchs' Nigger Yard."[24]

Having no friends to aid them, the McNeills found conditions hard from the beginning, and accommodations very poor. Jesse, of hot temper and astute mind, soon made his escape and went directly to his old home in Virginia. The Captain, hating to leave Missouri, soon afterwards escaped and made his way to friends in Ohio. He stayed there only a short time, after which he made his way back to the old homestead in Hardy County, western Virginia.[25]

Thus far, the career of John Hanson McNeill had been one of great vicissitudes. Suddenly transported from the peaceful pursuits of a farmer and cattle raiser to the turbulent and dangerous life of the military camp, he had suffered wounds and the loss of a beloved son, and imprisonment together with another son in a Federal fortress. By a display of daring and shrewdness, they had made their escape from prison. Experiences now awaited them that were even more extraordinary and hazardous.

IV

McNeills Rangers

The McNeills, father and son, spent almost a month in Hardy County living with relatives before they once again took up the cause of the Confederacy. Then the elder McNeill organized a company of cavalry to which he gave the designation, "McNeill Rangers." [26] He took the rank of captain for himself and bestowed a lieutenancy rating on Jesse.

The question of the legal status of the McNeill Partisan Rangers has often been discussed. Many Union generals considered McNeill and his men "bushwhackers", and not entitled to protection when captured, as was the case with other prisoners of war. They were clearly in error, because the McNeill Rangers were organized by John Hanson McNeill under the authority of an act passed by the Confederate Congress at Richmond. This act allowed companies to be organized as Partisan Rangers which were to cooperate with the armies of the Confederacy, but would be independent in command.

Few Partisan groups in either army rendered more effective service than the some 210 men on McNeill's roster.[27] Of this entire complement not more than two-thirds were ever gathered together at any one time. Authorities on the Civil War concur in their high estimates of the military achievements of the McNeill Rangers. What the records do not show is that it cost each and every Ranger to accomplish what he did. Their field of operations was well over a hundred miles from any Confederate controlled territory; thus no support from an army could be expected in a crisis. Also, there were many

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[26] Interview, Dr. J. M. Hinson.

[27] J. W. Bulla, McNeill's Last Charge, (Moorefield, 1944), pp. 24-25.

informants always ready to divulge their hiding place or set an ambush for them to fall into.

Tents or shelters were mostly unknown to the Rangers, for they rarely encamped two nights at the same place. To bivouac the ravines of the ridges and gorges of the mountains were mostly used, although at times the banks of the South Branch River afforded some comfort. Fires were seldom lit in order not to reveal their positions. Rain and snow allowed them no respite. Their arms were always at their side and ever-ready for action.

Each man furnished his own outfit and arms. Most clothes were captured from the enemy, and many of the Rangers throughout their service wore blue Union trousers, of necessity. The question of obtaining food was always present, and each man had to secure almost everything for himself. "Mammy" Little was the self-styled commissary, but the supplies for the entire company were contained in his two saddle bags, and usually these were almost empty.[28] A daylight raid on the enemy as they were preparing a meal was just about the only way for the Rangers to secure a full square meal, and, as many Federal Commanders were to discover, this happened too often. "Old Rangers told many tales on the tastiness of Yankee hard tack, corned beef, pickled pork, and even coffee with the luxury of sugar in it." [29]

It must not be assumed that all the McNeill Rangers fought solely or mainly out of loyalty to the Confederate cause. It is true that most of them were attracted to the principles of the Confederacy, and to the way of life in the slaveholding South, and that many felt a personal devotion to Captain McNeill. But love for adventure and loot, and the desire for a good fight lured many Valley men into the ranks of the McNeill Rangers.[30]

It might be said in passing, that the opportunity to drink freely any amount of hard mountain liquor they could attain attracted some men to the Partisan Rangers. Captain McNeill himself indulged in this mode of enjoyment.

John Hanson McNeill was the worshipped Captain of this group and his son, Jesse, a raw and rather unmanageable youth,

[28] Moorefield Examiner, March 4, 1915.
[29] Ibid.
[30] For a complete list of the McNeill Rangers consult Appendix C.

was one of several lieutenants. Lieutenant I. S. Welton was the Captain's most judicious counselor and close friend. Possessed of keen insight, always cool and calm no matter how difficult the situation, he was esteemed by the men for his courage, and he was doubtless the best beloved and respected member of the Rangers after Captain McNeill himself. Raison Davis, who after the war became Judge R. C. Davis, was known for his intelligence and many estimable qualities. John B. Fay was a military mathematician who never missed a calculation or made a blunder. His bravery was unquestioned, and his planning of strategy beyond reproach. The capture of General Crook and General Kelley, the fruit of his planning, attested to his military talents. The trusty scouts of Captain McNeill were invaluable to the campaigns of the band. Most frequently used for this purpose were David H. Parsons, Bill Maloney, and Robert Lobb.[31]

Hardy County was to be the main base of operations for the guerrillas, as well as the adjacent Hampshire County and nearby Maryland. Throughout the brief history of the McNeill Rangers, three main objectives were pursued: (1) to create general havoc among the Federal troops in the area; (2) disrupt traffic and communications on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; and (3) be a main source of supply in the foraging of beef cattle for the Confederate armies in the Shenandoah Valley.

The McNeill Rangers achieved these objectives and gave aid to other Confederate forces in scouting duty. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was constantly under attack and in need of repair. Damages of many hundreds of thousands of dollars occurred on the main line of the Baltimore and Ohio. Finally, untold scores of beef cattle found their way into the Shenandoah Valley through the efforts of the Partisans.

Fortune, it may be said with truth, constantly smiled upon the McNeill Rangers. Their brilliant operations reaped praise from friends and foes; General Robert E. Lee himself giving recognition to their valuable services numerous times.

[31] Moorefield Examiner, March 4, 1915.

V

The Rangers in Action

The newly-formed Rangers engaged almost immediately in skirmishes with the Union enemy. It appears that they were usually minor affairs of a hit-and-run variety with few casualties on either side. This state of affairs continued, it would seem, until January, 1863, when the company began to make itself felt as a more effective instrument of war against the blue-clad troops of the North. One of these minor engagements was the total destruction of a hay-wagon train near Moorefield Junction, Hampshire County. The wagons were enroute to Romney and guarded by some twenty-five Federal soldiers. The guards were dispersed, drivers and horses captured, and wagons burned.[32]

We have no record of any important Ranger action in 1862, but 1863 was only two days in history when Brigadier General W. E. Jones of the Confederate Army came out of the Shenandoah Valley and raided Moorefield and Petersburg, the latter a small town in Hardy County at that time. The McNeill Rangers scouted for his advance and withdrawal and performed invaluable services. Of the ninety-nine men captured by the entire raiding force, thirty-three were credited to McNeill's Rangers, along with forty-six horses, five wagons, and the killing of one Federal soldier.[33] Brigadier General Jones in his official report highly complimented NcNeill for his actions. This initial success also elicited fervent praise from General Robert E. Lee, and on January 20, in a communication to Colonel J. D. Imboden, he wrote: "The success of Captain McNeill is very gratifying, and, I hope may be often repeated."[34]

On the morning of February 16, 1863, the McNeill Rangers suddenly appeared on the Northwestern Turnpike, five miles from Romney. With only twenty-three men under arms, they attacked a supply train guarded by one hundred fifty infantry and cavalry, scared the defenders into a state of confusion with their weird rebel yell, and captured twenty-seven wagons, seventy-two prisoners, and one hundred six horses, and all the

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[32] Maxwell and Swisher, op. cit., p. 666.

[33] War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. 51, pp. 741-742. Hereafter cited as Official Records. All citations are from Series I.

[34] Ibid., p. 1102.

other equipment.[35] It was a brilliant victory for the rough-and-ready Rangers. Once again General Lee had words of praise for the Partisans. "This is the third feat of the same character in which Captain McNeill had displayed skill and daring."[36]

Captain McNeill spent the remainder of February and all of March in forming plans for a raid to demolish the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad bridge at Cheat River. On April 6, in an engagement with the Ringgold Cavalry at Burlington, Hampshire County, the Rangers captured twelve men, five wagons, and twenty-five horses.[37]

By April 20, the above mentioned plan for a raid on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad bridge at the Cheat River crossing had developed and enlarged into proportions to such an extent that General William E. Jones led an expedition of some 2,500 Confederates from the Shenandoah Valley into the South Branch Valley. Now, not only was the railroad bridge the objective, but a general raid into all of northwestern Virginia was contemplated. The *Official Records of the Rebellion* show that Captain McNeill was mainly responsible for this raid. As early as March 6, Captain McNeill had requested men to accomplish this very mission, except on a small scale.[38]

About a hundred men of Captain McNeill's company were greatly subordinated in Jones' raid, and even though the expedition was a success, the Cheat River bridge was not destroyed. Furthermore, the McNeill Rangers were not even given the chance at the attempt. They were sent under command of Colonel Harman and his forces to capture Oakland, Maryland, on the mainline of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Under Colonel Harman, the Rangers performed with merit, captured their objective and fifty-seven men.[39]

The Rangers returned to Hardy County following this excursion into hostile territory and made the usual forays against the Federal forces. On June 7, the Rangers invaded Hampshire County and captured Romney, an important post on the Northwest Turnpike.[40] Loitering comfortably in Romney for several

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[35] Ibid., Vol. 25, Part II, pp. [illegible].
[36] Ibid., [illegible].
[37] Ibid., Vol. 25, Part I, pp. [illegible]. In 1866, Hampshire County was divided, and Burlington became a part of Mineral County.
[38] Ibid., Vol. 25, Part II, p. [illegible].
[39] Ibid., Vol. 25, Part I, pp. [illegible].

days, the only activity they engaged in was the capture of fifteen excellent cavalry horses.[41] By June 15, however, a strong Federal cavalry detachment made the evacuation of Romney necessary, and the McNeill Partisan Rangers once again retreated into the security of the mountains.

The exact location of the McNeill Rangers during and following the battle of Gettysburg is not known, but they did perform the services of forages for General Lee's tired army. On June 30, they secured 740 heads of sheep, 160 heads of cattle, and 40 horses from Pennsylvania and brought them into the Shenandoah Valley.[42] Some time was spent there before returning to the South Branch Valley area.

Upon their return to Hardy County, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad once more felt the wrath of the Rangers. General Lee, desiring a raid to interrupt traffic on the Baltimore and Ohio line, directed Captain McNeill to take appropriate measures.[43] On August 2, between New Creek, Hampshire County and Cumberland, Maryland, the desired results were attained with the destruction of three railroad culverts.[44] This caused the interruption of all traffic on the Baltimore and Ohio for several days. Early September found a Federal force of 300 men moving upon Moorefield, from Petersburg. The Rangers had eighty men under arms at the time with Captains Imboden and Hobson, and their men, of General J. D. Imboden's command, in Moorefield. The three captains decided to surprise and ambush the Federal force under the command of Major Stephens, a Federal officer of undisputed bravery. The Federals made camp for the night enroute to Moorefield, and this proved to be a fatal mistake. The Rangers, leading the other Confederate forces over familiar terrain, infilterated behind the pickets of the Federals. At the break of dawn on September 11, Captain McNeill's favorite time for a surprise attack, the Partisans charged the Yankee camp, firing into the tents, and emitting the usual savage yell. Some resistance was encountered, but in a short time the fight was over. The Confederates suffered the loss of three wounded men, one of whom, however, was Lieutenant Walton. About thirty Federals were killed or

too badly wounded to be removed from the battlefield. One hundred forty-six men were captured, of which eight were officers, and three of these captains. Other property captured included nine wagons, two ambulances, forty-six horses, one hundred thirty-three muskets, twenty-nine new pistols, ten thousand rounds of ammunition, and the cooking utensils, tents, blankets, etc., of the whole force.[45] This brilliant attack once again moved General Lee to heap high praise on the McNeill Rangers.

In the latter part of September, high Confederate officers made an effort to enlist Captain McNeill and his Rangers into the regular Confederate army.[46] This did not meet with their approval although much pressure was exerted. The desire to go when and where they pleased and to be independent in all phases of war were probably the reasons for their rejection of regular army service.

On November 16, 1863, the McNeill Rangers attacked a supply train of some eighty wagons near Burlington. The train was hauling supplies to General Averell at Petersburg. A direct frontal attack was the mode of assault, and twenty-five men and two hundred forty-five good horses were captured. Most of the wagons were set on fire, but a Federal cavalry force of over six hundred forced the attackers to leave the scene immediately. As General Imboden in his official report states, "Captain McNeil took to the mountains, and by a wonderful march (for rapidity) escaped, though pursued by over six hundred men."[47] The casualties of the Rangers numbered one killed and five wounded, whereas, the Federal forces sustained two killed and nine wounded. One of the Federal dead included an officer.

The intense cold of December kept the actions of the Rangers at a minimum, with only scouting forays attempted.

The year of 1863 had been one of immense success for the Partisans of the South Branch Valley under Captain McNeill, although all Confederate forces could hardly declare the same. After Gettysburg the star of the Confederate States of America started its descent. Though operating on a small scale, the

Rangers of McNeill tried to reverse this trend to the best of their limited power. Raids were consummated, vast herds of cattle secured, and thousands of troops deployed to protect the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad from the depradations of the Rangers. All these actions aided the cause of the Confederacy, as General Lee confirmed on numerous occasions.

On January 1, 1864, Major General Fitz Lee made a forage raid into the South Branch Valley. The McNeill Partisian Rangers once again made themselves available for scouting duty. The Rangers secured many supplies under Major Gilmore's command, capturing some 3,000 pounds of bacon, burning much forage, and capturing several prisoners.[48]

With the coming of dawn, January 3, 1864, the McNeill Rangers captured a wagon train near Williamsport, Hardy County.[49] Two days later, they moved into and captured Romney, holding it for three days.[50] On this occasion, General Robert E. Lee again had high praise for the Rangers. "You will find, I think, Captain McNeill bold and intelligent, and others in the cavalry."[51]

Another forage raid of greater proportion than that made earlier in January by General Fitz Lee was planned by Major General Early in mid-January and carried out, starting on January 28. On reaching the South Branch Valley, General Early found the McNeil Rangers ready to be of aid in anyway possible. They performed scouting duty in their usual effective manner, and of the 1,200 head of cattle captured, the McNeill Rangers were credited with over 300.[52] Once more the Rangers of the South Branch Valley contributed appreciably to the feeding of the armies of the Confederacy. They retreated into the Shenandoah Valley with Early's forces and remained there until March 19. On this date, with over 500 men, many of whom were going to other commands in the West, Captain McNeill and his men left Staunton, Virginia for the South Branch Valley.[53]

The return to Hardy County was without incident, although Federal troops throughout the area were alerted to intercept

[48] [illegible]
[49] [illegible] Williamsport is now in Grant County.
[50] [illegible]
[51] [illegible]
[52] [illegible] "Expedition to Hardy and Hampshire," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, [illegible]
[53] [illegible]

the Partisans, if possible. Before many days had passed, however, several Confederate soldiers from other commands joined the Rangers. They were on unauthorized leave of absence, and thus deserters. Whether Captain McNeill knew this or not will never be known. In any event, he allowed the men to remain under his command and when requested to deliver them to the proper authorities, steadfastly refused to do so. This act greatly displeased General Imboden, and he ordered Captain McNeill tried before a general court-martial. Captain McNeill's candor and somewhat tactless tendencies almost cost the Rangers his services. But his notable war record made his acquittal a certainty. The trial, nevertheless, was a source of great embarrassment to him. The proceedings were held on April 12, and April 15, 1864, at Harrisonburg, Virginia. On both dates the court of General Imboden rendered the same verdict, "Not Guilty", and, "Captain John H. McNeill being honorably acquitted will resume his sword."[54] This decision closed the case and Captain McNeill returned to his mountains, ready to strike the Federal forces even harder blows.

The Captain was not in Hardy County more than two weeks before he led a successful attack upon the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at Piedmont, Hampshire County, now in Mineral County. This raid, one of the captain's most effective sallies, once again inspired feelings of acute chargin in Federal commanders in the area.

Piedmont was a small town at the foot of the Allegheny Mountains on the Maryland border through which ran the main line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The machine shops of the railroad, besides vast stores of railroad supplies, were located there. Through this narrow valley the North Branch of the Potomac River flows. At the time in question, Piedmont was the temporary "capital" of Hampshire County, Romney having been given up as the county seat because of the many raids by the Confederates.

Conceiving the idea of cutting the railroad, burning the machine shops, and creating general havoc, Captain McNeill with sixty men set out from Indian Old Field in Hardy County on May 3, 1864.[55] Traveling but a short distance, the Rangers

[54] From Captain McNeill's copy of the official findings of the court, now in the possession of the author.
[55] U. S. Southern Papers.

found Captain John T. Peerce on detached service for the Confederate army. Responding favorably to their invitation to accompany the Rangers, he joined them and was to play a vital role in the expedition.[56]

The high-spirited cavalry soon reached the Piedmont area by cutting through Knobly Mountain at Doll's Gap and proceeding by a path to the summit of the Alleghenies along the Elk Garden road to the foot of the mountain. At the intersection of the Piedmont-Bloomington road, they held a short conference, and by this time it was daybreak of May 4.[57]

Captain McNeill then ordered the telegraph wires cut and halted the first eastbound train that came by. Detaching the locomotive, McNeill sent it on to Piedmont with Lieutenant George Dolan and two other Rangers with a flag of truce. Their orders were to demand the immediate surrender of all troops and equipment there. The remainder of the Rangers followed the locomotive at a distance, feeling out the situation in a cautious manner.[58] Once in Piedmont few shots were fired, and the garrison quickly surrendered. Then the work of destruction began. In less than thirty minutes the roundhouse and machine shops were blazing with tongues of flames leaping into the air.[59]

Before the Piedmont telegraph wires could be cut, an alarm had been sent to New Creek, five miles to the east, where General Kelley had a large force at his command. Immediately he dispatched seventy-five men under Lieutenant Charles Bagley with one cannon, and they arrived in the Piedmont area before the Rangers evacuated their posts.[60] The Federals opened fire with their cannon from the high bluff on the Maryland side of the North Branch and soon forced the Rangers to retreat. McNiell's men quickly reached Bloomington and with only a few minutes delay once again took to the mountains and were soon out of gun range.

One unfortunate episode occurred when Federal cannoners hit a house and killed a young woman and one of two children.[61]

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[56] Captain John Peerce, "Capture of a Railroad Train," *Southern Bivouac*, [illegible], Vol. [illegible], pp. [illegible].
[57] J. C. Swanders Papers. Bloomington is in Maryland about one mile and a half from Piedmont.
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] Festus Paul Summers, *The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. A Study in the Civil War*, [illegible], pp. [illegible].
[60] *Official Records*, Vol. [illegible], Part I, pp. [illegible].
[61] Peerce, "Capture of a Railroad Train," loc. cit., pp. [illegible].

The total casualties of the Rangers were a few horses. There were soon replaced by seizure of Federal steeds. In escaping over the mountains, Henry Gassaway Davis, later to be the most eminent citizen of Mineral County, was apprehended with a large number of horses consigned to the Federal commander at New Creek. The Partisans relieved him of the steeds and went on their way.[62]

Two other incidents of the raid, of prime importance, should be mentioned. The first concerns the attempt to destroy Bloomington Bridge. The only western approach to this bridge was over Allegheny Front Mountain by way of the Pine Swamp Road. In the hope of cutting off vital supplies which traversed this route, a wrecking crew was set to work in an attempt to destroy the bridge. However, General Kelley's New Creek reinforcements arrived in time to prevent any great damage.[63]

The second incident was the capture of a train bound for Piedmont from the west and loaded with troops. Had this train been permitted to pass through Bloomington, McNeill and his Rangers undoubtedly would have been taken prisoners. The recently recruited Captain John T. Peerce was given ten men by Captain McNeill, when Bloomington was first entered, and instructed to delay or capture any train that approached. In the *Southern Bivouac* Captain Peerce describes his capture of the train.

> We stopped two freight trains and gave the citizens permission to help themselves with which they were highly pleased. I sent Mose Everett, the conductor of one of these trains, up the road under guard to signal the passenger train east, which would be due in half an hour. About this time I was kindly informed by one of the citizens that . . . the next train would be loaded with soldiers. . . . I dismounted the men . . . and scattered them along the road to ascertain the facts as the train passed. . . . I soon heard the signal for down brakes, followed shortly after by the cry for my men of 'loaded with soldiers.' I called at the top of my voice, 'mount your horses'. . . . I could see there were two full car loads of soldiers and that they were fully armed and equipped, their guns sitting diagonally across the windows. My first impulse was to run and save myself and my little command . . . I shall never be able, however, to describe the intense feeling which pervaded me or the rapidity with which the perils of McNeill and his men presented themselves to my mind. . . .

[62] J. C. Saunders Papers.

> I first met Samuel Gill, the conductor, who, at my request, pointed to the Captain in command, standing on the rear of the car. I dashed my horse upon the platform and, with my pistol at his breast, demanded his surrender. . . . I ordered him to bring his men out, to which some one added, 'Leave your guns inside,' which order was immediately obeyed.
>
> As soon as I discovered they had surrendered in good faith, I ordered them to fall into line as they left the cars, and immediately sent a messenger to Captain McNeill, informing him that I had one hundred prisoners and nobody to guard them . . .
>
> I marched the prisoners, under guard of four or five men, to the Virginia side of the river, leaving the remainder of our little band to destroy the arms and bring away such as we might desire to keep. There were found on the cars eighteen revolvers, some of which were finely finished and all fully loaded.[64]

With the arrival of the Federal forces from New Creek and the return of Captain McNeill and the Rangers, Captain Peerce ordered the trains burned and the prisoners paroled.

The President of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, J. W. Garrett, reported to Secretary of War, E. W. Stanton, that "the extensive machine and carpenter shops of Piedmont have been burned. The engine and cars of the east-bound main train and two-tonnage trains have also been destroyed. Five other engines damaged. . . . The heat of the fire at the wreck of the trains at Bloomington had been too intense to permit much work, but during the night we expect to have the entire road again clear and train running regularly."[65]

Captain McNeill's official report to James A. Seddon, Confederate Secretary of War, on the capture of Piedmont and the burning of the railroad equipment follows:

> . . . We burned some seven large buildings filled with the finest machinery, engines, and railroad cars; burned nine railroad engines, some seventy-five or eighty burthern cars, two trains of cars heavily laden with commissary stores, and sent six engines with full head of steam toward New Creek. Captured the mail and mail train and 104 prisoners on the train. . . .[66]

Unwilling to rest on his laurels, Captain McNeill led his troops into Romney on May 10, and captured the town without resistance. Once again the towns-people of Romney found that

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[64] Peerce, "Capture of a Railroad Train," *loc. cit.*, pp. 332-333.
[65] *Official Records*, Vol. 37, Part 1, pp. 382-383.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

the vicissitudes of war had thrust another change of status upon them.[67] Shortly thereafter the rangers engaged a large force of Federals at Springfield, a few miles north of Romney, defeated them, and captured sixty prisoners.[68]

The blows of the McNeill Partisan Rangers grew heavier as the Civil War progressed. Brigadier General Kelley, Federal commander in the area, was especially irritated at the tempo of their raids and the havoc created by each one. On May 22, 1864, in a special communique to Colonel Higgins at Green Spring, General Kelley ordered: "As soon as practicable send Captain Hart with 125 or 150 men on a scout up the east side of the river, to Moorefield and vicinity, after McNeill." With but 150 men the shortsighted General Kelly thought that he could capture or kill his elusive enemy. General Kelley continued: "It is not necessary for me to give Captain Hart any minute instructions. He is well acquainted in that vicinity. I will simply say I want McNeill killed, captured, or driven out of this valley."[69]

Within a few days, Captain Hart with a detachment of Ringgold Cavalry was on McNeill's trail, in conformity with General Kelley's orders. He found his quarry and after a severe skirmish the Rangers retreated into one of their many mountain retreats without any casualties. The Ringgold Cavalry suffered four men killed and six wounded.[70] General Kelley had been rebuffed once again.

On the morning of June 19, the Rangers under command of Lieutenant Dolan attacked a supply wagon train near Petersburg, killed six men and wounded several more in the initial charge. They captured the train, but Lieutenant Dolan failed to take the proper precautions for a counterattack, and the Federals rallied and recaptured the train. During this counterattack, Lieutenant Dolan was killed and the Rangers dispersed. Even so, one wagon was burned completely and several horses captured.[71]

A rather farcical affair occurred on June 26, at Springfield, Hampshire County, resulting in a Federal loss of some sixty

men captured, together with over a hundred horses and all equipment. The Rangers under Captain McNeill were foraging for cattle in the vicinity of [illegible] when they came upon the Union soldiers, all in the nude, having a hilarious time swimming in the South Branch River. The Confederates charged upon the embarrassed soldiers and captured them without firing a shot. Even some of the captives had a laugh at their capture. Such trenchant humor as this led General Kelley to state: "I fear it will turn out to be a great disgraceful affair."[72]

On July 3, 1864, General Imboden ordered the Rangers to execute a strategic move to deceive and confuse the Federals so that he could strike elsewhere. Captain McNeill had over 600 men under his command and made a move towards the Romney Pike.[73] The next week the Rangers spent in lightning-like moves, striking the Baltimore and Ohio railroad at one point, and then another, each time tearing up track and wrecking small bridges.

Soon after July 26, the Partisan Rangers moved out of their camp near Moorefield and started on a foraging raid for cattle. General Kelley once again displayed great trepidation. "McNeil crossed the river below Old Town and robbed several stores at that place last night. . . . You must keep yourself fully posted in regard to McNeill's movements, or your command will be all gobbled up some of these fine mornings. If you have not sent scouts out send them at once."[74]

By August 3, some 130 head of beef cattle had been confiscated by the Rangers in the vicinity of Burlington.[75] About this date, also, three Baltimore and Ohio railroad culverts were destroyed near New Creek.[76] Then the trek towards Moorefield and a hiding place for the cattle was the objective. This was accomplished without mishap.

A Confederate raiding party under the command of General McCausland was defeated by General Averell, on August 6, near Moorefield. The McNeill Rangers took part in this action and if they were ever defeated on the field of battle, this was

[illegible]

the occasion. It is doubtful if this can be considered a defeat, however, since less than fo[illegible]ers participated in the disaster. The forces of M[illegible]out 3,000 strong, were overtaken by Averell's cavalry and forced to fight a running battle that cost the Confederates over 420 casualties and prisoners.[77] The Rangers had been acting as scouts when the command was overtaken and although suffering no casualties themselves gave as much aid as possible. The escape for the remnants of General McCausland's command into the mountains was led and abetted by the McNeill Rangers.

On August 28, the Rangers with almost 300 men under arms left Moorefield and headed towards Romney.[78] The town was captured late that night. Local forays were than carried out and such points as Green Spring and Springfield were subject once more to the excursions of the Rangers. They were able to spend about a week here before they were forced to return to the mountains of Hardy County in order to escape the forces of General Kelley.

VI

Death of a Partisan Leader

The intrepid Captain John Hanson McNeill was not destined to lead his beloved Rangers much longer. A raid on a Federal company guarding the bridge near Mt. Jackson, Virginia, on October 3, 1864, was his last. In this foray he was mortally wounded. He lingered on, suffering severe pain, until November 10.[79] Ironically enough, John Hanson McNeill died in the same manner as his hero, "Stonewall" Jackson: he was shot accidentally by one of his own men.[80]

In September, 1864, General Early was in the Shenandoah Valley and in dire need of food for his troops. Captain McNeill was notified of this need and sent to procure a herd of cattle. The Rangers had gone west from Hardy County into the Allegheny Mountains and secured a large herd of beef cattle. Before the cattle could be driven over the mountains, General Early's army was in retreat in front of General Sheridan's army.

[illegible]

Upon receiving word of this, the shrewd McNeill anticipated a reorganization of Early's forces and subsequent retreat of Sheridan's army through the Shenandoah Valley. A raid to intercept and harass the Federals was the order of the day. Leaving the cattle to graze on the mountainside, the Rangers gathered a force and quickly traversed the mountains eastward. By October 2, with a force of sixty men, the McNeill Rangers were near Mt. Jackson, Virginia.[81]

At this time the Federal army was near Harrisonburg, Virginia, some twenty-seven miles distant. A long train of wagons carrying supplies to them had to pass over the bridge, near Mt. Jackson, that spanned the Shenandoah River. For the protection of this force, some one hundred men were stationed at the bridge.[82]

Learning from his scouts the situation, Captain McNeill waited for the break of day, his favorite time of attack, and pounced upon the unwary Federals. At the head of his Partisans, a full length in front, Captain McNeill rode into the enemy's midst, emitting the rebel yell with his full voice. Some of the Federal soldiers rushed from their tents to their stacked guns, while others fled. Confusion reigned with the Rangers having their usual success. The Federals were fighting in the semi-darkness, as well as a surprised group could, but to little avail. All at once a familiar cry was heard; Captain McNeill fell from his horse, badly wounded. Lieutenant Jesse McNeill was called to his side and told to "take command and show yourself a man."[83]

The hardy Captain McNeill, ever mindful of the welfare of his men, ordered: "Leave me here, I am too badly wounded to be moved."[84] Jesse stated he would die before leaving his father and with the aid of fellow Rangers put Captain McNeill on his horse for the last time.

In the meanwhile the task at hand was completed. Sixty Federal prisoners were captured and many others killed and wounded.

A short distance down the road a Methodist minister, the Reverend Addison Weller, made his home. It was decided to

[81] Ibid.
[82] Moorefield Examiner, August 31, 1905.
[83] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. [illegible]
[84] Ibid.

lodge the Captain there. The Partisans and their prisoners started for the house. In front of them rode their commander, supported on either side by two of his men.

Elizabeth Weller, wife of the minister, was awakened by the firing of the guns. She hastily dressed and went into the front yard. Some years later she gave the following account of the procession.

> We saw at a glance he was severely wounded, as they filed into the yard, and lifted him from his faithful old horse and laid him on the grass. His noble form, writhing in agony, reminded one more of a wounded lion. The fire still flashed from his clear, blue eyes. . . . As his men bent over him with tears of sympathy, he looked into their faces and said: 'Goodbye, my boys, leave me to my fate, I can do no more for my country.' One of his men knelt and offered up a short prayer, commending their gallant leader to a merciful God. As he arose and left with the men, the Captain's eyes followed them as long as they were in sight. Then for the first time, he exclaimed: 'Oh, I am in such agony; do something for me if you can!'[85]

Mrs. Weller immediately made a pot of coffee and Captain McNeill drank it quickly. This did but little to soothe the wound. She then got out a small medicine kit that had been left with the Wellers by the Union forces in case any of their men should be wounded nearby. Some morphine was found and administered to Captain McNeill by the trembling Mrs. Weller. Following this, Mr. Weller and a servant lifted the semiconscious Captain onto a blanket and carried him into the house and upstairs. An examination of the wound revealed that the ball had gone through his body from the shoulder downward and was apparently lodged at the base of the spine.

The fear of falling into Yankee hands troubled the Captain immensely, for he greatly desired to be in Confederate-held territory at the time of his death. With Sheridan's army in control of the area, the Captain had to be disguised in order to prevent his capture. Mrs. Weller suggested that his beard and hair be shaved off, and to this he agreed. He was now only semiconscious.

The word had spread quickly that Captain McNeill had been badly wounded in the battle at Mt. Jackson bridge, and that the Yankees were scouting the countryside in search of him.

[85] Moorefield Examiner, August 22, 1895.

Twice on October 3, scouting parties had come to the Weller home in search of their ever-vanishing enemy. Both times they failed to recognize the clean-shaven man in the dimly lighted upstairs room of Mrs. Weller.[86]

The Rangers, in order to avoid being captured by the reserves of the bridge guard, had to leave the Captain shortly after arriving at the Weller home. With him for a short time were Jesse and two other followers. Davy Parsons and Payton Tabb.[87] While Jesse remained with his father, Captain Hugh Ramsy Koontz of the Seventh Virginia Cavalry took command of the Rangers and guided them back to the mountains. Captain Koontz lived near Mt. Jackson and had been Captain McNeill's official guide on the raid. The captured Federal prisoners were sworn and paroled as soon as the mountains were reached.[88]

When Lieutenant Jesse McNeill thought it safe to leave his father, with two companions he started for his mother's home at Howard's Lick in Hardy County, some fifty miles distant.[89] Before daybreak the next day, Mrs. McNeill and several of the Rangers arrived at the bedside of the Captain after traversing the hazardous mountain trails. Mrs. McNeill had ridden the entire distance behind her son without the benefit of a saddle. A devout Christian, she prayed for Captain McNeill and did all that was possible to make him comfortable and to prolong his life.[90]

Mrs. Weller lends the final note on the Captain's revelation to the Federals.

> It was three days before the Yankees returned bringing with them a man who had deserted from Captain McNeill's company. The leader said, as I unlocked the door: 'Madame, I have brought a man this time who will know if this is Captain McNeill.' I saw at a glance that the man was Simon Miller, an old friend of mine. He recognized me and took in the situation, not telling them that he knew me. . . . I followed them in the room, and as their eyes met he said, 'No gentlemen, you are mistaken in the man.' They left and we saw nothing more of them for a week.
>
> On the day that Sheridan fell back, after burning everything in reach, and went into camp near our house, a number of officers

[86] Ibid.
[87] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 413.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Harper Pictorial, March 29, 1902.

called to see the Captain. He had been converted that morning through the earnest prayers of his wife, and when asked whose command he came under, he said 'McNeill's.' They then asked if he was not McNeill, and looking straight in their faces, he said: 'I am.'[91]

At last the dreaded guerrilla McNeill was in Federal hands. However, he was too sick to be moved then, so the Federals announced that they would send a guard and ambulance for him in several days. That very night a small group of Confederate soldiers made their way into the area, placed Captain McNeill into a carriage, and moved beyond the Federal lines and into Harrisonburg. In this manner the Partisan leader's last wish was fulfilled. The carriage had been obtained through the efforts of General Early who had visited Captain McNeill one day when the tide of battle put the Weller home in Confederate territory. General Early then promised McNeill to take him south, if the tide of battle turned once again, and he kept his promise.[92]

The Captain and his friends were quartered in Hill's Hotel while in Harrisonburg. For two more weeks, he lingered near death until November 10, 1864, when he died, in the arms of his wife and surrounded by devoted friends. Almost immediately he was buried in the Harrisonburg cemetery with Masonic honors. Some two months later his body was removed to Moorefield and reburied in Cemetery Hill.[93]

While Captain McNeill was lying mortally wounded in the Weller home, the celebrated General Sheridan happened to hold a conversation with him. Retreating before General Early, Sheridan had made his headquarters for that night at the Weller home. The Federal general, to whom the identity of the invalid was unknown, went into his room and talked to the Captain in the most amiable manner. Previously, Sheridan had called McNeill and his Partisan Rangers, "the most daring and dangerous of all bushwhackers."[94]

The war was over for Captain John Hanson McNeill. He gave his life for a cause that he thought was just. The divided country had lost a potential leader of great wisdom and humanity.

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[91] Moorefield Examiner, August 23, 1866.
[92] Candiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. [illegible]
[93] Ibid., p. [illegible]
[94] Duffey, Two Generals Kidnapped, p. [illegible]

No longer would he harass the Federal wagon trains, or the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. No longer would Federal commanders have to sleep with a wary eye open for a sudden attack by the guerrilla from Hardy County.

It is estimated that from first to last over 25,000 troops were diverted by the Federal commanders to guard the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad against the McNeill menace. Furthermore, the captures made under the leadership of Captain John Hanson McNeill averaged forty prisoners for every man on the Ranger roster, besides the many horses, cattle, munitions, and wagon trains seized. To this must be added the fact that the Rangers under his command never failed to capture the objective they started for, or lost a battle.[95]

VII

Captain Jesse Takes Command

What of the McNeill Rangers after the death of their founder and leader? With the war going against the Confederate States of America, would the company disintegrate and go into oblivion? The record of history shows that on the contrary, the McNeill Partisan Rangers rose to their greatest heights after the passing of their leader. They attained this zenith under the leadership of Jesse Cunningham McNeill, not yet twenty-three years of age. Lieutenant Jesse carried on in the fine tradition of his father.

The last six months of the momentous struggle found the McNeill Rangers under a man who was little more than a youth, and had had no preparation for leadership. The Rangers immediately proclaimed Lieutenant Jesse McNeill their new leader, although with some apprehension. Jesse McNeill was a chip off the old block, much like his father in his earlier days. An excellent shot with both pistol and rifle, a good rider who always was on his father's heels in previous engagements, and a good fighter, was Jesse. His 165-pound frame constantly yearned for a good fight.[96] The youngster never forgot one thing his father told him, and he constantly retold it to the Rangers. This was the well-known thesis that in leading a raid, one should always look well for a getting-out-place before going in. This principle the Rangers scrupulously followed.

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[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-6.

[96] *Cumberland Daily News*, April 20, 1946.

The greatest flaw in the character of the new Captain was his quick temper and impetuous manner, bordering at times on rashness. As his father stated, Jesse was, "a hairbrained daredevil if there ever was one."[97] On his deathbed the old Captain gave his son "hell that day but the younger man was to reflect in later years that the final lecture was the greatest favor his father ever did him."[98] More than once the elder McNeill lashed the boy with his tongue for his "cussedness and damn foolishness."[99] Only one point remained in doubt; would the responsibility now placed on his shoulders sober his impetuousness and cause him to measure up to the exigencies of the hour?

In the light of subsequent events, it can be said that Captain Jesse Cunningham McNeill accepted and successfully coped with the responsibilities thrust upon him.

> He met a crisis in the career of the company. He displayed qualities of leadership, of exceptional ability and effectiveness. He not only inspired confidence in his own men, but by his ceaseless vigilance, swift action, and audacious daring, it became evident to the enemy that they had a foeman to reckon with of more than ordinary skill. His campaign was one of incessant activity and was as brilliant as it was brief. The young leader had weighed the responsibility which had suddenly dropped on him . . ., and while the sorrow of bereavement was clutching his heart, addressed himself to the situation with an inflexible purpose to succeed.[100]

The Federals were quick to respond to the change in the command of the Rangers. The old Captain, astute and cunning as a fox, had long outwitted the Federal commanders. They had long fretted at their failure to capture the elusive McNeill, and many demotions resulted from their failure to destroy the guerrillas. Now the Partisans were under the leadership of a new and untried leader. Destroy them before they could recover from the shock of the elder McNeill's death was the motto of the Federal officers. Almost immediately they launched new and aggressive measures designed to wipe out the McNeill Partisan Rangers. They were soon to discover, however, that Captain Jesse had the heart and courage of his father.

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[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Moorefield Examiner, March 4, 1915.

Although some of the Rangers went into Woodson's Company after the elder McNeill was killed, most of them united behind Jesse.[101] The striking force of the Rangers was not weakened by the death of Captain John Hanson McNeill, nor was their spirit. Before long they renewed their raids and reconnoitering sorties.

On November 1, 1864, accompanied by White's Company, the McNeill Rangers attacked the Federal post on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at Green Spring, Hampshire County, West Virginia. Most of the Federals were captured, together with all their horses and equipment.[102] On the way to Green Spring, Romney had been occupied once more and held by a token force, until the following day. It was given up, when the Rangers returned from their raid closely pursued by Federal cavalry. As usual, the Federals failed to catch the elusive Rangers.

On the eve of Federal-sponsored elections, to be held throughout Hampshire and Hardy Counties, on November 8, the Partisans rode through the area creating general havoc.[103] The sight of small bands of Rangers near the polls kept most would-be voters away, and gave encouragement to Confederate sympathizers in the region.

It was well-known that most of the people in the South Branch Valley, and Moorefield in particular, aided the Rangers at every opportunity. General Kelley, whose command was kept in a constant state of alarm by the depredations of the Rangers, determined to destroy the new leader and his followers. His first move was the issuance of a proclamation to the citizens of the Valley "that if they continue to harbor and feed McNeill's men that the whole Valley will be laid waste like the Shenandoah Valley."[104] A spokesman for the local citizenry assured the General that they would cease to give aid and comfort to McNeill's men. But this was not the first time that such assurance had been given. General Kelley's next step was to send Colonel R. E. Fleming with 150 cavalrymen and one piece of artillery to "capture, destroy, or otherwise annihilate McNeill."[105] Three miles north of Moorefield, on No-

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[101] Official Records, Vol. 43, Part I, pp. 652-653. Woodson's Company was another band of Confederates operating in the area.

[102] Ibid., Vol. 43, Part II, p. 822. White's Company was a guerrilla band operating in the South Branch and Shenandoah Valley areas.

[103] Ibid., p. 841.

[104] Ibid., Vol. 43, Part I, p. 869.

[105] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 412.

vember 27, Fleming found his objective. To his dismay, the Rangers seemed to be waiting for him. Although the Partisans numbered less than fifty, without a minute's hesitation, the young Captain ordered a charge in broad daylight across an open field. The rebel yell echoed throughout the area, and the precipitous rush of the Rangers made it appear as if thousands were dashing across the field on their chargers. Only a moment of violent struggle ensued before the Federals were put to rout. Panic spread through their ranks as they rushed pell-mell toward New Creek, whence they had come.

Eager to press his advantage, Captain McNeill ordered a few of the Rangers to gather the booty and prisoners, others to pursue closely the fleeing Federals, while he, with the remainder of the troop, took a short cut in an effort to cut off Fleming's panic-stricken men. They were caught between the two forces when McNeill succeeed in heading them off, and a hand-to-hand encounter then took place with pistol butts, sabers, and fists as the principal weapons employed. Seeking to escape in all directions, most of the Federals eventually made their way back to New Creek, but not without the loss of some forty men as prisoners, and an additional six to eight killed or wounded and left on the field of battle. One piece of artillery was captured, along with the wagon load of munitions and supplies, plus an ambulance.[106]

That night the Rangers made camp at the southern edge of Moorefield. Their prisoners were safely locked in the courthouse in the center of town. Early the next morning near daybreak, a detachment of Colonel Fleming's force, dispatched by another route in order to attempt a surrounding move against the Rangers, entered Moorefield. They were not aware of their Colonel's defeat and rode cockily down the main street. Captain McNeill, asleep when they entered town, was warned and quickly prepared for the coming battle. A headlong charge of the McNeill Rangers once again scattered the Yankees, and they fled the town, in good order. They returned to New Creek, breathless but having suffered no casualties.[107] Captain McNeill returned to his blanket for another hour's sleep.

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[106] The figure forty is taken from Confederate reports. *Official Records*, Vol. 43, Part 1, p. 807. The Federal report lists twenty as captives. *Official Records*, Vol. 43, Part 1, pp. 863-865. The remainder of the figures are from Federal reports.

[107] Dudley, *McNeill's Last Charge*, pp. 13-16.

During most of the month of December, 1864, Captain McNeill was confined to bed in the home of Felix B. Welton. In early December he had severely injured his leg in an accident, and the kindly Welton was only too glad to act as his host. The injury was painful, but not serious. Although the accident was taken by some as an omen of bad luck, McNeill began to plan a raid on Cumberland, Maryland, and the capture of two Union generals stationed there.[108] His leg injury may have well been a blessing in disguise, for it enabled him to plan the raid in minute detail.

As the year 1865 began, it was becoming increasingly clear that the Confederate bid for victory was doomed to failure. But the tough Rangers of the South Branch Valley were heedless of this fact, and continued their career of depredation.

In the latter phases of the war, the Rangers accepted all who would join their troop; overlooking the fact that some were regular Confederate Army men. Captain John Hanson McNeill had previously engaged in the same practice, only to bring down upon himself the wrath of the higher echelons in the Confederate Army, in the form of a court-martial. Captain Jesse McNeill's recruiting activity attained such proportions that it prompted General Early to ask for the revocation of the charter of the McNeill Partisan Ranger organization.[109] Another source of conflict between General Early and Captain McNeill was the refusal of the Rangers to serve under Major Gilmer, another Confederate guerrilla leader. whom Early had sent to take command.[110] In early February, 1865, Major Gilmer was captured by the Federals and attested to the fact that McNeill's men mutinied against him, and he was forced to arrest one of the leaders. The name of the leader is unknown, but it is nevertheless surmised that it was Jesse McNeill.

General Early had the issue taken before the Secretary of War, who on February 18, 1865, revoked the charter of the McNeill Rangers.[111] From this time on, any name-calling by the Federal commanders against the depredations of the McNeill Rangers would be justified, especially if "bushwhackers" were used. Thus the legal basis for fighting was gone, but not

[108] Cumberland Daily News, April 20, 1908.
[109] Official Records, Vol. 43, Part II, p. 1061.
[110] Ibid., Vol. 46, Part II, p. 453.
[111] Ibid., Vol. 46, Part II, p. 1261.

so the spirit for the cause they fought for. The Rangers struggled on and were soon to receive wide acclaim and the gratitude of the once hostile General Early.

Even as governmental authority was revoking their charter, the Rangers once again attacked Romney and captured it on February 7, after a brief encounter with Federal cavalry.[112]

The amazing seizure of Generals George Crook and Benjamin Kelley from their hotel in Cumberland, Maryland, on the night of February 21, was to be the next and culminating achievement of the McNeill Rangers. This remarkable episode will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

The war was rapidly drawing to a close and the Partisans were to take part in but one further engagement after their brilliant coup at Cumberland. This occurred on March 30, and followed their usual pattern of warfare. For the last time they disrupted the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The Rangers, but forty strong, emerged from a gorge about three miles east of Patterson's Creek, Hampshire County, and captured a small party of railroad repairmen. These men were then forced to tear up considerable track. The westbound passenger train arrived on time at 7:00 p. m. and was wrecked, with the engine and two cars crashing into the mountainside. Only a few shots were fired, and the passengers were forced to give over all weapons and valuables. Two Federal captains and two lieutenants, passengers aboard the train, were carried off. The mail was opened, part of the contents taken, and the train was burned, all within twenty minutes.[113] Hastily, the Rangers departed from the scene with Federal cavalry from New Creek, Patterson's Creek, and Green Spring hot on their trail. Once again, however, the Partisans made good their escape into the mountains.

VIII

Action at Cumberland

By the beginning of the year 1865, it was evident that the Confederacy was in its death throe. In the twilight of the Confederate cause, a brilliant exploit of the McNeill Rangers lightened the general gloom. This was the notable raid made

[112] Maxwell and Swisher, *op. cit.*, p. 333.
[113] Official Records, Vol. 46, Part 1, pp. 538-539. Patterson's Creek is now in Mineral County.

by the Partisans on Cumberland, Maryland, on February 22, 1865.[114]

This coup, planned some two years before, had some of the essentials of a comic-opera kidnapping. Captain Jesse McNeill had many times heard his father joke about a raid he was going to make into Cumberland in order to capture two Federal generals. The prospective victims were General Benjamin Kelley and General George Crook. Why did Captain John Hanson McNeill desire to capture these generals? A discourtesy shown his wife in 1862 appears to have been the immediate cause of his project. Mrs. McNeill, in Ohio, had been refused a passport by General Kelley to visit her husband. Kelley had not only refused her a passport, but also ordered her arrested and sent back to Ohio. The following letter was sent by a Confederate official in her behalf:

> Brig. Gen. S. A. Meredith, Agent of Exchange:
>
> Sir: I beg leave to call your attention to the fact that the wife, daughter, and son of four years of age of Captain McNeill, of the Confederate service, who have been sojourning for more than a year with their relations at Chillicothe, Ohio, were arrested at Oakland, on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, about a month since and sent to Camp Chase. They left Chillicothe for the purpose of paying a visit to Hardy County, Virginia. Will you permit them to accomplish their mission? In fact, will you release them from Camp Chase? . . .
>
> Ro. Ould
> Agent of Exchange[115]

With the aid of a friend Mrs. McNeill escaped and finally completed the trek to her husband's headquarters at Moorefield.[116] When Captain McNeill heard of this incident, he exclaimed, "General Kelley will regret that, for I will go into Cumberland and kidnap him and carry him off."[117] The death of Captain McNeill relegated the plan to oblivion until late in 1864. At that time, two of the Rangers were prisoners in Union hands and held in close confinement. Captain Jesse decided that retaliatory measures were in order, and it was at this time that his father's plan was revived.[118]

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[114] William H. Lowdermilk, History of Cumberland, (Washington, 1878), p. 430.
[115] Official Records, I, v. 5, Part II, pp. 304-305.
[116] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 413.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., p. 414.

John B. Fay, a native of Cumberland who knew every house and street, was designated as scout. He chose as his companion, C. Ritchie Hallar, a young Missourian.[119] They entered the city in early February and brought back all the information desired. A date was tentatively set for the raid.

To double-check on details, Fay and Hallar re-entered Cumberland a few days before the Rangers started to move through the South Branch Valley. George Stanton, an Irish secessionist, and an employee of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in Cumberland, met and gave the scouts valuable data on the conditions in the city. His information later proved completely reliable.[120]

After the final reconnaissance had been made, Fay and Hallar retraced their steps and were twenty miles from Cumberland on the morning of February 21. They stopped to have breakfast with a friend, Vance Herriott, in a quiet section of Hampshire County, about five miles from Romney.[121]

The morning was especially cold and a blinding snowstorm was in progress. Hallar was dispatched to report to Captain McNeill, who, according to prior agreement, had moved his camp about ten miles north or Moorefield and fifty miles from Cumberland.[122]

In McNeill's camp was a force of mounted cavalry numbering sixty-three men in all.[123] Of these, forty-eight were McNeill Rangers while the remaining fifteen represented other Confederate commands, the Seventh and Eleventh Virginia Cavalry of Rosser's Brigade.

When Hallar arrived with his report, McNeill gave the order to feed and water the horses, and prepare for the long hazardous ride into enemy territory. The troop mounted in the late afternoon, and after proceeding by an obscure route, arrived at Herriott's about sunset. Fay was waiting and eager for the exploit. All was in readiness for the final dash.

To heighten the boldness of the proposed kidnapping, it should be pointed out that General Sheridan's army lay at

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[119] Lowdermilk, op. cit., p. 421.
[120] J. Thomas Scharf, History of Western Maryland, (Philadelphia, 1882), pp. 296-297.
[121] Dulles, Two Generals Kidnapped, p. 8.
[122] Scharf, op. cit., p. 297.
[123] Dulles, Two Generals Kidnapped, p. 21.

Winchester, Virginia, and a considerable force of Federal troops was entrenched at New Creek, now Keyser. Both Winchester and New Creek were nearer Moorefield than Cumberland. In view of this fact, the prospect of being cut off, even if the kidnapping project proved successful was a likely one.

Twenty rugged miles lay between the destination and Herriott's. The sky was now clear, but in many places the snow was banked in formidable drifts. The cold was intense and each member of the company was dressed accordingly.

The route included a trek over Middle Ridge, thence across the valley to Patterson's Creek and over the numerous small ridges to the base of Knobly Mountain. At Knobly the snow drifts became very deep and all were forced to dismount and make a path for the horses. The ascent to the top was the most strenuous part of the raid. Passing down Knobly by the Ren Seymour home, the Potomac River was forded at the Sam Brady farm. Maryland had been invaded once more by the Partisans.

Near the Brady farm, the Irishman, George Stanton, was waiting with the final report. It was favorable and nothing of importance in the city had changed since Fay's mission. He did report that two hours previously a strong troop of Federal cavalry had passed, enroute to New Creek. This information was welcomed by all, since it meant less Union cavalry in Cumberland.[124]

At this point Cumberland was only five miles away by the New Creek road; and it was well guarded by pickets. The route as planned by Fay, twice the distance as the New Creek road, was to flank Cresaptown and strike the National Road. This route would not be picketed and Cumberland could be entered through the Narrows on the northwest side, which is a pass through Will's Mountain. Several delays had allowed the hours to slip by and the night was so far gone it would have been impossible to reach the city before daybreak.

Captain McNeill called a council of war and presented two alternatives: the project had to be given up, or they must run the hazard of the pickets on the New Creek road. Still another alternative would be a lightning raid on the pickets at the rail-

[124] *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

road station at near-by Brady's Mills.[125] The partisans unanimously rejected this idea, for they held that a force of infantrymen was a prize of little consequence as compared with two Major Generals. It was finally decided to hazard the New Creek road.

The men fully realized the seriousness of the task before them: lacking the countersign they must overpower and silence the Union pickets, or if an alarm was set off and the Union cavalry aroused the Rangers would have no chance to escape.

Captain McNeill and Sergeant Joseph Vandiver took the lead on the New Creek road. They were followed by Joseph W. Kuykendall and John B. Fay, as the advance guard, the remainder of the troop under Lieutenant Isaac Welton keeping close behind.

A thin layer of snow had fallen and the intense cold formed a crust which made a crackling noise under the horses' hoofs. Two miles were cautiously traveled and an hour and a half before dawn the first picket post was sighted at the mouth of a ravine. A solitary cavalry vidette was standing on the roadside and bellowed out the familiar challenge.

> 'Halt! Who comes there?' 'Friends from New Creek,' was the response. He then said: 'Dismount one, come forward and give the countersign.' Without a word Lieutenant McNeill put spurs to his horse, dashed forward, and as he passed, being unable to check his horse, fired his pistol in the man's face. We followed rapidly and secured the picket, whom we found terribly startled at the peculiar conduct of his alleged friends. Two comrades, acting as a reserve, had been making themselves cozy before a few embers under a temporary shelter in a fence corner about one hundred yards in the rear. Hearing the commotion in front they hastily decamped toward the river. They got no further than the railroad, however, for we were close upon them, and in response to our threats of shooting, they halted and surrendered.[126]

The three captured pickets were brought to the middle of the road and efforts were made to elicit the countersign from them. Knowing that night was quickly ebbing, Captain McNeill threatened each of them with death unless they yielded their precious secret. They refused to speak even when ques-

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[125] S. Myers, *Myers' History of West Virginia*, (Wheeling, 1915), Vol. I, p. 482.
[126] Maxwell and Swisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217. It will be observed that McNeill is still called Lieutenant, although most authorities consider him Captain immediately after his father's death.

tioned separately. Without further ado, Captain McNeill placed the muzzle of his pistol between the eyes of one of them and prepared to pull the trigger. The men stood as if petrified. A suggestion that he be hanged and the countersign choked out of him brought a halter swift around his neck. With a rapidity that surprised all, the vidette gave the desired answer. "Bull's Gap is the countersign."[127]

The three captives were then mounted on their horses, which were near by, and taken into Cumberland and out again. One of these men was released on the exit from the city to tell the pertinent facts on the capture of Crook and Kelley, to the Federals.

The next picket post was fully a mile away and fortunately the shot fired by Captain McNeill had not been heard. An intervening hill was passed over and the second post was quickly within view. There were five men stationed at this post. A shed housed them and their indulgence was a game of cards before a blazing log fire. As the troop drew near, led this time by Sergeant Kuykendall and Fay, a picket got up, reached for his musket and advanced to meet the Rangers. He demanded the countersign and Sergeant Kuykendall intimated that they were cavalry returning from New Creek. The order to dismount and give the countersign was given. This was the instant for striking and before a shot could be fired the post was surrounded and captured. Their guns and ammunition were destroyed, and the pickets themselves left ungarded with the instructions to remain until the troop returned. How implicit they carried out the instructions is not known, but the mission was accomplished without any forewarning.

Moving toward the slumbering city once more, the lights of the streets were soon seen. The horizon betrayed the fact that daylight was approaching and action must be quick.

On the outskirts a halt was momentarily called by Captain McNeill and he hastily appointed two squads of ten men each, who were directly charged with the capture of their prizes. Sergeant Kuykendall was in charge of the squad to enter the Barnum House and capture General Kelley, while Sergeant

[127] Duffie, Two Generals Kidnapped, p. 18.

Joseph L. Vandiver was to invade the Revere House and capture General Crook.[128]

In an ironical vein, one of the men detailed to capture General Crook was Jacob Gassmen, a former clerk in the Revere House. Furthermore, his uncle then owned the building. Sergeant Charles James Daily, also assigned to Crook's capture, was the son of the hotel proprietor at that time, and whose sister, Mary, afterwards became Mrs. Crook![129]

Fay was delegated to cut the telegraph lines with a few assistants. Without losing anymore time, the troop was urged on by Captain McNeill.

Cumberland was entered with only one shot fired so far. A dog trot was quickly slowed to a careless gait and Green Street was approached. Going down a slow-sloping hill, the courthouse was passed and then over the chain bridge across Will's Creek to the principal thoroughfare of the city, Baltimore Street. On this street stood both the Barnum and Revere Houses.

In the slow gait up Baltimore Street, the Rangers whistled Yankee tunes and exchanged greetings with isolated patrols, or, with people going to work in the pre-dawn hours. A few of the men were disguised in blue overcoats taken from the pickets, but the dawn was still not strong enough to give notice to the shades of blue and gray.

The Revere and Barnum Houses were within 100 yards of each other so that Captain McNeill stopped the troop with the head of it in front of the Revere House and the rear in front of the Barnum House.

A lone sentry leisurely paced his post in front of each hotel and paid no apparent concern to the halting troop, doubtless thinking another scouting party was coming in to report. Sprigg Lynn, a native of Cumberland, and member of Kuykendall's quad was the first to dismount. He quickly captured and disarmed the sentinel in front of the Barnum House. After learning from the sentry that General Kelley was on the second floor of the building, Lynn, Kuykendall, John H. Cunningham, and John Daily proceeded to General Kelley's apartment.

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[128] Ibid., p. 51.

[129] Maxwell and Swisher, op. cit., pp. 278-279.

Without delay they entered that room which was assumed to be the General's. It proved to be that of the adjutant general, Major Melvin. He was asked where General Kelley was and responded nervously that he was in the adjoining room and that the door at his side was the one to enter.

General Kelley, a sound sleeper, had to be awakened and his surprise was complete. He was told he was a prisoner and requested to make his toilet as speedily as possible. While performing his forced task, General Kelley inquired as to whom he was surrendering. Kuykendall replied, "To Captain McNeill, by order of General Rosser."[130] After this, General Kelley cooperated to the fullest extent and had little to say. In a few minutes he and Major Melvin were smartly led to the street and mounted on horses with a Ranger on the rear of each horse.

At the Revere House an almost identical scene took place. John Fay had the following to say about it in Maxwell and Swisher, *History of Hampshire County*.

> The sentry having been taken and disarmed, the capturing party ascended the stone steps of the hotel and found the outside door locked. The door was opened by a small colored boy and the party entered. The boy was greatly alarmed at the brusque manner of the unexpected guests, whom he evidently suspected of improper intentions. When asked if General Crook was in the hotel, he said: 'Yes, sah, but don't tell 'em I told you.' . . . While Vandiver and Dailey were getting a light in the office below, Gassman went to No. 46, General Crook's apartment, and thinking the door was locked, knocked at it several times. A voice within asked: 'Who's there?' Gassman replied: 'A friend,' and was told to come in. Vandiver, Tucker, and Dailey arrived by this time and all four entered the room. Approaching the bed where the General lay, Vandiver said in a pompous manner, 'General Cook, you are my prisoner.' 'What authority have you for this?' inquired the general. 'The authority of General Rosser, of Fitzhugh Lee's division of cavalry,' said Vandiver in response. Crook then rose up in bed and asked: 'Is General Rosser here?' 'Yes,' replied Vandiver, 'I am General Rosser. We have surprised and captured the town.' That settled the matter as far as the bona fide general was concerned. He was immensely surprised at the bold announcement, but knowing nothing to the contrary, accepted Vandiver's assertion as the truth. He submitted to his fate with as much grace and cheerfulness as he could muster.[131]

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[130] Dailey, *Two Generals Kidnapped*, p. 11.

[131] Maxwell and Swisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 660-661.

When the group reached the sidewalk, a clerk from the hotel rushed out and asked how many Confederates they had captured. Before he finished speaking, he realized his mistake. John Taylor grabbed his hat off his head; John Cunningham ran through his pockets; while W. H. Maloney caught him by the back and jerked his overcoat over his head. Then he was left motionless and dumbfounded.[132]

While the hotel kidnappings were transpiring, Fay and Hallar went to the telegraph office ajoining the Revere House and proceeded to put that instrument out of order. The operator, A. T. Brennaman, was asleep when they entered and did not awaken until they pulled a table out from under his outstretched feet. The destruction done by Fay and Hallar was not complete, however, and in a short time after they left, the apparatus was repaired.[133]

General Kelley and his adjutant, Major Melvin, were taken some time before General Crook and his party left their hotel and mounted. The headquarters flag and other war booty of importance was secured, and the entire command then moved down Baltimore Street in a quiet and orderly manner.

At the chain bridge, a large government stable was located. The desire to secure better horses led to the taking of General Kelley's charger, "Philippi."[134] This stout-hearted horse was among the fastest in Virginia and was given to General Kelley by West Virginia soldiers, in honor of his victory over Colonel Porterfield at Philippi. Several other excellent horses were also taken, even a Shetland pony belonging to an officer's son. In the fast exit of the troop, however, the pony was turned loose when it could not keep up.

Fay was then ordered by Captain McNeill to lead them out of town by the shortest possible route. The Canal Street road was taken and within a hundred yards of the canal bank, a dozen or more pickets loomed into view. They were quickly surrounded and captured. After destroying their arms and ammunition, they were left standing amazed in the middle of the street.

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[132] Maxwell and Swisher, loc. cit.
[133] Shaffer, Four Generals Kidnapped, p. 12.
[134] Ibid., p. 13.

A gallop was then ordered and no one else was sighted until the column was a mile from the city, on the road to Wiley's Ford. At the canal bridge pickets were in evidence. Vandiver was leading the group and not slowing down on the approach of the picket post, one of the videttes were heard to say, "Sergeant, shall I fire?"[135] Vandiver, in an angry voice, shouted, "If you do, I will place you under arrest. This is General Crook's bodyguard, and we have no time to waste. The rebels are coming, and we are going out to meet them."[136] This ruse completely baffled the pickets and the Rangers passed under the bridge and hastily crossed the Potomac River.

This post was the Federal's outmost guard. As the column proceeded at a gallop on Virginia soil once more, daylight was upon them. When they reached a point four or five miles from the city, the boom of a canon was heard, giving the alarm.

What a fantastic exploit had taken place. The men all sensed it and smiled from time to time. Though on Virginia soil again, the McNeill Rangers were far from safe. The intervening territory was disputed by both sides, and the heart of the horses was now to determine if the kidnapping could be carried to a successful conclusion. The destination was Moorefield, but no guarantee could be had that that town was in Confederate hands. To the west, at New Creek, was a very strong force of cavalry with good roads to travel. This was but forty miles from Moorefield, while the Rangers were almost sixty miles away. As stated above, General Sheridan was at Winchester, sixty miles from Moorefield with a direct road connecting. He possessed enough cavalry to block all roads and scour the countryside. Captain McNeill's hope was that the telegraph lines between these three Federal outposts were still out of commission.

In Cumberland the cavalry was known to be small, but, large enough to annihilate sixty-three tired men who were in a cumbersome position due to their prisoners and war trophies. At this stage, a familiar saying was to the requisite for success. "The life of the scout hangs on the heels of the horse."[137]

General Crook, being given a saddleless horse at the government stable, was quite uncomfortable at the pace the Rangers

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[135] Maxwell and Swisher, op. cit., p. 662.
[136] Maxwell and Swisher, loc. cit.
[137] Dudley, Two Generals Kidnapped, p. 11.

were going. He called to W. H. Maloney and asked him to try to obtain a saddle. Being a congenial fellow and wishing to make the prize of the expedition as comfortable as possible, Maloney rode ahead in an effort to carry out General Crook's wishes. The first house sighted was that of Jacob Kyle, and after threatening to burn the house, secured a saddle, and General Crook no longer was forced to ride bareback.[138]

The coldness of the day kept the horses as nimble as could be expected under the conditions. Romney was passed through with the captured headquarters flag flying. The mixture of blue and gray coats confused the citizens as to whether this was a Yankee or Confederate force.

Upon leaving Romney, the old Trough Hollow road was taken.[139] This was an ancient road in little use and running parallel with the South Branch of the Potomac. It was on this road that the pursuing cavalry from Cumberland were sighted and the only casualties resulted.

Two miles south of Romney, Joseph Sherrard and John Poland had stopped at the farm house of William B. Stump.[140] The Rangers moving on, saw the Federals approaching and John Poland ran from the house in an attempt to escape. He was shot and wounded and Sherrard captured. Wasting little time, the Federal cavalry pressed forward again. Captain McNeill had appointed a rear guard and hastily strengthened it. The prisoners were put at the head of the column and told to make all possible haste. Before long the rear guard had secured and excellent strategic position on a hill flanked by the river. When the Federal cavalry realized the position they were in, the only thing to do was to retreat. They broke off the pursuit and the rear guard maintained its vigilance from that position for an hour, giving the main body of Rangers an excellent start. By the time the rear guard rejoined the main body, the sun had softened the snow to such an extent that the speed of the horses was greatly decreased.

The Moorefield Valley was finally entered and the men were becoming jubilant, since the Federals would have to overtake

[138] Ibid., pp. 15-16. The theory that Kyle was a Confederate sympathizer and learning that McNeill wanted the saddle, readily gave it, has also been put forth.
[139] Scharf, op. cit., p. 631.
[140] Duffey, Two Generals Kidnapped, p. 16.

them quickly now, or, not at all. Some of the Rangers were undoubtedly beaming for a fight with the opposing cavalry. The New Creek road came into view and to the astonishment of many, a strong cavalry force was sighted riding at full gallop. At this point the New Creek road was but a mile from the one the Rangers were traversing. Only the South Branch of the Potomac, running parallel between the two roads, kept the pursued and pursuers from having a full scale battle.[141] It was easily ascertained that the blue clad cavalry was the 22nd Pennsylvania regiment, commanded by Colonel Greenfield. This force known as the Ringgold cavalry was from New Creek station and equipped with fresh horses.[142]

The objective of Captain McNeill was to reach Moorefield and pass through it with the pomp and ceremony that behooves a conqueror after winning a major victory. The exhibition to friends and loved ones of the successful kidnapping was in every man's mind. On the other hand, the 22nd Pennsylvania had its plans also, reach Moorefield, cross the bridge, and annihilate the McNeill Rangers after recovering Generals Crook and Kelley.

The sight of the two opposing forces riding parallel, with the river, just out of gun range, must have been amusing, at least for the Rangers. However, it was becoming apparent that the blue coats would win the race with their fresh horses. Evening had started to settle over the valley and when only two miles from Moorefield, Captain McNeill resorted to the well-known and familiar tactics of the guerrilla. He quickly led the troop into the woods skirting the road, and onto a well-known trail. Over the back ridges they sallied to a point of security, seven miles to the east of Moorefield.[143] Here, in a little-known or traveled gorge of the mountains, camp was made and the weary men and horses were soon at rest. The Ringgold cavalry bivouacked at Moorefield that night and although reinforced during the night by cavalry from Sheridan's army at Winchester, made only a desultory and futile effort to follow the Rangers.[144]

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[141] The South Branch River could be forded at certain points along the route, but the time it would take would allow any rider to gain at least one-half mile. The danger of being shot while in the water is also of note.
[142] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 416.
[143] Maxwell and Swisher, op. cit., p. 623.
[144] Dudley, Two General Kidnapped, p. 11.

An interesting sidelight on the race along the river was the remark made by General Crook when Captain McNeill ordered the troop into the woods. As General Crook looked back at the strong force of Federals less than a mile away, he exclaimed sadly, "Oh! So near and yet so far."[145]

The McNeill Rangers within a twenty-four hour period had ridden over ninety miles. All the distance had been fraught with danger and had been covered at a strenuous pace for both men and horses. Mountains, hills, and rivers had been crossed. Snow and intense cold seldom relented its hold. Food had been scarce, and last, but far from least, the burden of the prisoners was always present.

Early the next morning, the forced march was resumed by the two Generals under the charge of Lieutenant I. S. Welton, Rasion C. Davis, and others in charge of the prisoners.[146] Captain McNeill and the majority of the Rangers remained in seclusion for some time.

The prisoners under Lieutenant Welton were taken to Harrisonburg, Virginia, and from there to the headquarters of General Early, where they were treated with bountiful food and soft beds. The two generals had traveled 154 miles in three days, a difficult effort for even a skilled horseman in perfect physical condition.[147]

On the second night of the kidnapping, a coincidence of interest took place. With the generals sleeping on the cold ground in the ridges of Virginia, an entertainment was going on in Cumberland, and Miss Mary Clara Bruce, who, after the war was to be Mrs. Kelley, appeared on the stage. She sang "He Kissed Me When He Left," whereupon a drunken soldier in the audience vehemently exclaimed, "No I'll be damned if he did—McNeill didn't give him time." Miss Bruce withdrew from the stage and did not appear again.[148]

The night of the capture, the father of Dr. J. W. Duffey [one of the Rangers] was a transient guest at the Revere House. He knew nothing of the capture until the next morning when he came downstairs for breakfast. There was much speculation

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[145] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 417.
[146] Duffey, "Two Generals Kidnapped," p. 17.
[147] Ibid., p. 18.
[148] Ibid.

as who did it, how it was accomplished, and whether or not the generals would be recaptured. The rebels were being roundly traduced when suddenly a loud voiced speaker exclaimed, "Gentlemen it's the Jumboest joke of the war!"[149] The crowd broke loose in a burst of laughter, and filed into the dining room for breakfast.

It is related that General Kelley was subjected to unmerciful bantering during the escape through the picket line. This is portrayed by the following:

> After re-crossing the North Branch into Mineral County territory, the group was challenged by a Union soldier. With lofty disregard for truth, McNeill replied, "Company B, Third Ohio Cavalry." Disregarding his instructions to require a countersign, the sentry asked, "What's up!" McNeill's response was a classic: "Oh, old Granny Kelley had a nightmare that the Rebs are about to come down on him. He is sending us out in this bitter weather to scout this side of the river. I sometimes wish they would catch him. Don't you think he is a regular old granny whenever he hears there are a few Johnnies about!" To the consternation of the powerless captive, the picket—Kelley's own subordinate—agreed. "Yes, I do, every time I am put on outpost duty in such weather."
>
> To add to Kelley's humiliation, General Crook, who was close beside him during this colloquy, kept nudging him with his knee, and chuckling at his expense.
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> At the last outpost the Rangers had to pass, a similar conversation took place. Still impersonating the Ohio soldier, Captain McNeill remarked, "I wish that General Grant would remove Granny Kelley from Cumberland, and put Crook in command." When the outpost officer concurred in this wish, General Crook laughed audibly and again punched Kelley's leg. All the way to Libby Prison at Richmond, Crook lost no opportunity to poke fun at his brother general.[150]

Even though the feat of going into an enemy-held city and escaping with two generals was astonishing, the fact that a greater harvest could have been reaped was never thought of by Captain McNeill and his Rangers. It so happened that this very night of the kidnapping, five generals were asleep in Cumberland. Besides Generals Crook and Kelley, Generals Lightburn, Duvall, and Hayes were also present.[151] The last was later to become President of the United States.

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[149] Ibid., p. 20.
[150] J. C. Saunders Papers, pp. 2-3.
[151] Lowdermilk, op. cit., p. [illegible]

The number of Federal troops that were stationed in Cumberland the night of the raid has not been ascertained. To arrive at a definite figure would be practically impossible since the Federals tried to minimize the event, and the Confederates attempted to magnify its significance. Regardless of the number, the fact that sixty-three men could go among at least several thousand and kidnap two generals, one of them the post commander, was a fact of astounding magnitude.

An examination of the most reliable estimates follows. John Fay in Maxwell and Swisher, *History of Hampshire County,* states that there were from 6,000 to 8,000 troops in the city.[152] W. H. Loudermilk in his *History of Cumberland* also estimates the number at 6,000 to 8,000.[153] W. D. Vandiver in the *Missouri Historical Review* concludes that there were 7,000; and Dr. J. W. Duffey, in his booklet *Two Generals Kidnapped,* agrees with Vandiver.[154] An article in the *Cumberland Evening Times,* of June 4, 1925, places the number at 7,000 to 9,000.[155] The J. C. Saunders Manuscripts give the figure at "close to 10,000."[156] Major General P. H. Sheridan of the Union Army reported to General Grant that 3,500 to 4,000 men were occupying the city.[157]

We thus have extremely varied estimates from the best sources. After a diligent study of the materials, the present writer concludes that the number was between 6,500 and 7,000. Surely there were more than 3,500, as General Sheridan suggests, to guard such a city when it was the base of operations in protecting the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The reverse must also be said in the Confederate reports that 10,000 were present since it would hardly have been practical to have that many men stationed there.

The official report of General Robert E. Lee to John C. Breckinridge, Secretary of War, pertaining to this exploit is as follows:

> General Early reports that Lieutenant McNeil with thirty men, on the morning of the 21st, entered Cumberland, captured and brought out Generals Crook and Kelley, the Adjutant-General of

[152] Maxwell and Swisher, op. cit., p. 674.
[153] Loudermilk, op. cit., p. 430.
[154] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 413. Duffey, *Two Generals Kidnapped,* p. 1.
[155] *Cumberland Evening Times,* June 4, 1925.
[156] J. C. Saunders Papers, p. 2.
[157] *Official Records,* Vol. 46, Part II, pp. 619-620.

the Department, two privates, and the headquarters flags, without firing a gun, though a considerable force is stationed in the vicinity. Lieutenant McNeill and party deserve much credit for this bold exploit. Their prisoners will reach Staunton today.[158]

The communique of the frantic Federal officers are of special interest and may be found in Appendix A.

Today in Cumberland, Maryland, one may walk down Baltimore Street to the Winsor Hotel, formerly the Barnum House, and read the following inscription on the outside of the building:

Capture of Generals B. F. Kelley and George Crook
Nights of February 21-22, 1865

A company of Confederates, young men from Cumberland, Maryland, Hampshire and Hardy Counties, West Virginia, captured several picket posts, obtained the countersign, "Bull's Gap," rode into the city, captured the two Commanding Union Generals, Kelley and Crook, and Adjutant General Thayer Melvin, and sent them to Richmond, Virginia, as prisoners of war without firing a shot.

General Kelley and Melvin were taken from this building, then the Barnum House.

The Generals were asleep when taken from their respective beds.

General Lew Wallace was stationed here in command of a large body of Indiana Zouaves. Also Brigadier General Hayes, later President of the United States.

This most daring episode of the Civil War created a great sensation all over the country, as at the time several thousand Union Troops were stationed in Cumberland.[159]

In summary of this remarkable feat and to support the claim that the capture of these two Generals was one of the most amazing exploits of the Civil War, a quotation from General Crook himself may be noted. After capture and in Harrisonburg, Virginia, he remarked, "Gentlemen, this is the most brilliant exploit of the war!"[160]

Another quotation from a famous guerilla in the personage of Colonel John S. Mosby, speaking to Lieutenant Welton accompanying Crook and Kelley to Richmond, is also worthy of note. "This surpasses anything I have ever done; to get even

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158 J. C. Saunders Papers, p. 4.
159 Secured by the author from the hotel.
160 Dudley, Two Generals Kidnapped, pp. 18-19.

with you boys, I have got to go into Washington and carry Abe Lincoln out."[161]

Governor O'Ferrall of Virginia in his book, *The Civil War*, gives his reflections on the raid. "It was as bold and successful achievement as any during the war, and deserves a place in every book which treats of that stormy period."[162]

General John B. Gordon, in his *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, calls the capture of Crook and Kelley, "one of the most thrilling incidents of the entire war."[163]

In the *History of the Laurel Brigade*, by Captain William N. McDonald, it is stated: "The capture of two distinguished Federal Generals—Crook and Kelley . . . was an event that excited the North with astonishment at the audacity, and the South with admiration for its boldness and exultation over its success."[164]

IX

Epilogue: Setting of the Sun

With the surrender of Lee and his army at Appomattox in April of 1865, the Civil War was essentially over. Captain Jesse McNeill and his Partisan Rangers, loath to admit defeat, nevertheless asked for an armistice on April 24, to last for a short period.[165] This was rejected by General Hayes, the Federal Commander at New Creek. He then ordered a company of cavalry into the South Branch Valley with orders to present the liberal terms of surrender that General Lee had accepted. If these were rejected, General Hayes had the authority to hunt them down and give no quarters.[166] Captain McNeill then decided, after hearing his lieutenants voice their opinion, that surrender was the wise course of action. The Partisans took into account the fact that the Federals would have a very difficult time tracking them down, and that in three years the Federals had failed to capture any large number of Rangers. Ultimately, however, they made arrangements for their capitulation.

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[161] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," *loc. cit.*, p. 418.
[162] *Cumberland Evening Times*, June 4, 1928.
[163] General John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, (New York, 1918), p. 363.
[164] William N. McDonald, *A History of the Laurel Brigade*, (Baltimore, 1907), p. 241.
[165] *Official Records*, Vol. 46, Part III, p. 934.
[166] *Ibid.*, p. 936.

The majority of the McNeill Partisan Rangers met a company of Federals a mile west of Romney on May 8, 1865.[167] The Rangers remained on one side of the South Branch River and the main body of Federals on the other. Two or three officers and a half dozen men crossed the river and came face to face with Captain McNeill and his men. No unnecessary ceremony followed. The Rangers threw down their arms and were paroled.[168] The Federal officer in charge then observed that the implements of war before him were museum pieces at best and not the excellent captured Federal rifles that most of the Rangers were known to possess. "A competent Judge who saw the arms piled on the ground declared they were not worth ten dollars a ton."[169] The Federal accepted them with reluctance.

A controversy that could have had disastrous results then followed. The terms of surrender between General Lee and General Grant had allowed the Confederates to keep their horses, but required them to surrender their arms and equipment. Almost every Ranger had captured his equipment on the field of battle. This included everything from new Federal saddles to Federal blankets. The Rangers considered this equipment spoils of war and steadfastly refused to give them up. The Federal officers were just as insistant that they be surrendered along with the antiquated rifles.[170]

A stalemate ensued, and Captain McNeill declared that he would not surrender at all unless permitted to keep the equipment. The Federal officers began to fear for their safety. They realized that the bulges under the coats of McNeill's men were revolvers and that the main body of their forces were across broad South Branch River. A small boat was the only means of crossing the river, and the Federal officers had no illusions as to who had the upper hand at this particular time. Without delay, the officer in charge gave permission to keep the Federal equipment and the Rangers immediately left the scene.[171] Upon reaching Moorefield, they held their final meeting as Confederate soldiers, disbanded, and returned to the status of loyal and peaceful citizens.[172] They had embraced a cause that had failed, and now they accepted their defeat proudly.

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[167] Ibid., p. 1114.
[168] Maxwell and Swisher, op. cit., pp. 687-688.
[169] Ibid., p. 688.
[170] Ibid., pp. 688-689.
[171] Ibid., p. 689.
[172] For the official report of the surrender see Appendix B.

Some thirty years after the war, the surviving Partisans extended an invitation to their former bitter enemies, the 22nd Pennsylvania regiment known as the famous Ringgold cavalry, to attend a friendly reunion. The remaining veterans of the 22nd Pennsylvania accepted the summons of their ancient foe, and the resulting reunion was marked by much revelry and evocation of legendary exploits. A tremendous quantity of food was consumed and vast amounts of mountain wine and whiskey were imbibed. The former McNeill Partisans Rangers were truly congenial hosts.

Tributes were paid to fallen heroes by all present in the two-day reunion, and many shamelessly shed tears. The founder of the McNeill Rangers of the extinct Confederate States of America was eulogized in an atmosphere of almost sacred reverence. "A most touching tribute to Captain John Hanson McNeill was pronounced at the foot of the monument which marks his grave by the Federal Colonel who had once been his prisoner and was treated with such magnanimity that he had ever since cherished a feeling of love and admiration for his captor and wished that he might call his noble spirit back to earth again."[173]

The Partisan Rangers of McNeill had passed into history, as had the "War of the Rebellion" itself.

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[173] Vandiver, "Two Forgotten Heroes," loc. cit., p. 419.

APPENDIX A

Official Federal Reports on the Capture of General Crook and General Kelley

Winchester, Va., February 21, 1865—9:45 a.m.

Maj. Gen. H. W. Halleck,
Chief of Staff:

A party of from fifty to sixty rebel cavalry surprised General Crook's pickets at Cumberland at 3 o'clock this morning, entered the city and captured Generals Crook and Kelley, and carried them off. I ordered the cavalry at New Creek to Moorefield, and sent from here to same place, via Wardensville, but have but little hope of recapture, as the party is going very rapidly. I think the party belongs to McNeill's band.

P. H. Sheridan,
Major-General

Cumberland, Md., February 21, 1865—6 a.m.

Major-General Sheridan,
Winchester, Va.:

The party that surprised and captured the pickets, and carried off Major-Generals Crook and Kelley and others, seem to have been about 100 picked men from Rosser's command. They remained only about ten minutes. Except capturing a few horses they have done no other injury. I have sent all the cavalry I have (about fifty) after them. I have ordered all the cavalry from New Creek after them. I will send a regiment of infantry to New Creek at 7 o'clock to replace the cavalry sent out from there. Cannot parties be sent out from the Valley to intercept them? The rebels told a story of Rosser's brigade being out of town some miles on the New Creek road. This I do not credit. I will send any further information.

Respectfully,
Robt. P. Kennedy,
Major and Assistant Adjutant-General.

Headquarters Third Division Cavalry
February 21, 1865.

Colonel Pennington,
Commanding First Brigade:

General Crook, General Kelley, and other officers were captured last night by about sixty men belonging to McNeill's command. The force were hurrying toward Romney. The chief of cavalry directs that a force

be sent immediately from this division to intercept them, if possible. Have 300 of your best mounted men get ready at once with two days' rations and one of forage. I would suggest that the men be selected from the different regiments. Do not detail an officer of higher rank than major to accompany the expedition, as Lieutenant-Colonel Whitaker will go in command. Have the men rendezvous at your headquarters.

Very respectfully, &c.,

G. A. Custer,
Brevet Major-General, Commanding,

Cumberland, Md., February 21, 1865.

Major-General Sheridan,
Winchester, Va.;

The New Creek cavalry has been ordered to Moorefield. Couriers have gone after them, and with orders not to spare horse-flesh. From all information there were not more than 100, perhaps not more than 50. They are riding very fast.

Robt. P. Kennedy,
Major and Assistant Adjutant-General.

Cumberland, Md., February 21, 1865.

Brigadier-General Lightburn,
New Creek, Va.:

Captain Botsford has just returned, and says that the rebels are about sixty in number, and that they are going direct to Romney, via Springfield. They are riding very fast. Hurry up your parties, and head them off. Don't spare your horses.

Robt. P. Kennedy,
Major and Assistant Adjutant-General.

Cumberland, Md., February 21, 1865.

Colonel Higgins, or
Brigadier-General Lightburn,
New Creek, Va.:

The rebels have gone to Romney through Springfield. Send a force to Romney direct. Their horses must be tired, and if you hurry them up, and they ride very fast, they can head them off. Let them go at once; all that can be got off. Don't let there be a moment's delay. Please report when they get off.

Robt. P. Kennedy,
Major and Assistant Adjutant-General.

Cumberland, Md., February 21, 1865.

Colonel Higgins,
New Creek, Va.:

Send couriers after Major Troxel with orders to push forward with all haste to Moorefield. He may be able to compel the rebels to take the Wardensville road, and a force has gone from Winchester to Wardensville. Send as much force as possible after them. The regiment of infantry will leave here for New Creek within an hour. Don't spare your horses. Tell Major Troxel to lose not a moment, as a moment is now everything.

Robt. P. Kennedy,
Major and Assistant Adjutant-General.

Baltimore, February 21, 1865—7 p.m.

Hon. Edwin M. Stanton,
Secretary of War:

In response to inquiries our agent at Cumberland advises, viz: Generals Kelley and Crook were taken out of their beds about 3 o'clock by a rebel force variously estimated from 50 to 150, but I think there was not more than 50. . . . Only rebel officer heard of was a Lieutenant McNeill. . . . It is unknown whose command was in Cumberland.

J. W. Garrett,
President, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

Source: War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, vol. 49, Part I, pp. [illegible]

APPENDIX B*

Official Federal Report on the Surrender of the McNeill Rangers

Cumberland, Md., May 8, 1865.

His Excellency A. I. Boreman,
Governor of West Virginia:

Sir: I have the honor to advise you that Captain McNeill has surrendered his command upon the terms given by General Grant to General Lee. The majority have already been paroled, and arrangements have been effected looking to the paroling of the balance of his company as well as of those belonging to other commands, but operating in the Moorefield Valley and under his direction.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. H. Emory,
Brevet Major-General, Commanding.

Source: *War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederates Armies*, Vol. 46, Part III, pp. 1116-1117.

APPENDIX C*

Complete Roster of the McNeill Rangers

John Hanson McNeill, Captain
Jesse Cunningham McNeill, Captain

Boggs, Augustus, Lieutenant
Dolan, Bernard, Lieutenant

Dailey, Charles, Sergeant
Hopkins, David, Sergeant
Little, George, Sergeant

Vandiver, Joseph, Lieutenant
Welton, Isaac S., Lieutenant

Judy, Isaac, Sergeant
Miles, William, Sergeant
Taylor, Harrison, Sergeant

Acker, John
Alexander, M. S.
Allen, Green M.
Allen, J. Herman
Allen, I.
Albright, James
Armentrout, Sol
Athey, William N.
Anderson, Nathan H.

Bacon, P. E.
Baldwin, Henry
Bare, William
Barnum, Joseph
Bean, David F.
Bean, Fred
Bierkamp, William C.
Bennett, Henry
Bobo, Jack
Bowman, Jack
Blakemore, William
Blakemore, George
Branson, William
Brathwaite, Newton
Browing, E. R.

Clary, Lloyd
Clary, Richard
Clary, Thaddeus
Carson, John
Cain, Thomas
Carroll, George
Cleaver, William

Clutter Jeff
Cannon, Jack
Congar, David
Connally, Jack
Cooper, J.
Coleman, Jack
Cokeley, John
Cokeley, George
Coffman, Joseph
Cosner, Wayne
Crim, John W.
Cresap, Van S.
Chisholm, W. Wallace
Crawford, James W.
Childs, Benjamin
Cunningham, John H.
Cunningham, George F.

Davis, Rezin C.
Davis, Frank
Daugherty, Samuel
Deevemon, Peter
Dyce, Samuel
Dyer, Robin
Duffey, J. W.
Duval, H. Rieman

Enright, E. C.

Fay, John B.
Fisher, John O.
Frederick, Lewis

Gray, Sinclare K.
Grady, George

Source: Duffey, Dr. J. W., McNeill's Last Charge, pp. 24-32. Southern Historical Society Papers, Vol. 36, pp. 313-325.

Harness, George S.
Harness, W. W.
Hack, Andrew
Harper, John
Harbaugh, Adam
Harvey, John L.
Halterman, John
Hess, James K.
Heavener, Jesse
Hallar, C. Ritchie
Hill, Ervin C.
High, John W.
Hopkins, William
Houck, J. William
Houseworth, John
Hoard, Hiram
Hutton, John
Hoye, William D.
Hunter, W.
Hutter, C. R.

Jacobs, George W.
Johnson, Fisher
Johnson, Charles
Johnson, John
Jones, Samuel M.
Jones, H. Clay
Judy, David

Kellerman, Henry
Kiracofe, Nelson

Larey, Matt
Liggett, Robert
Logan, Lloyd
Long, John R.
Lobb, Robert
Lynn, John
Lynn, Sprigg S.
Lake, William

Mace, John
Martin, William
Martin, Taylor
Magennis, James
Markwood, J. W.
Markwood, George
Mason, James W.
Maloney, William H.
Maguire, William

Maupin, A. Lincoln
Michael, Isaac
Miller, Simon
Miller, Rader
Miller, Charles F.
Miller, James
Mills, Reuben
Mitchell, James
Mountz, John D.
Moore, Samuel
McQuade, John

Neville, Thornton
Nichols, Charles W.
Norris, William

Ohaver, M. V.
Ohaver, John W.
Overmon, John
O'Rouke, John
Oats, Isaac E.

Parker, Joseph A.
Painter, N. B.
Parsons, David M.
Pennybaker, J. E.
Pool, William H.
Reed, John
Ridder, Henry W.
Richardson, John
Richards, Ben Frank
Riddleberger, Joseph
Roger, John
Robinson, I. M.
Rosser, Robert R.
Rhodes, Oliver L.

Seymour, Abel
Seymour, William
Seymour, Henry
Showalter, David R.
Showalter, John
Shore, Harry W.
Sanders, James
Shafer, Sam H.
Smith, John
Smith, Daniel
Seaman, William
Seaman, Jacob
Shytiger, William

Shryock, James
Scott, F.
Shipman, Jonathan
Shoemaker, William
Steele, John
Stewart, Fred A.
Stickley, J. Snyder
Spalding, B. William

Tabb, Peyton
Tabb, Harlan P.
Temple, James M.
Taylor, George R.
Tevebaugh, Isaac
Tucker, Samuel T.
Tucker, Erasmus
Trumbo, Morgan G.
Triplett, Joseph I.
Triplett, John E.
Truehart, Henry M.

Vallandigham, James L.
Vandiver, George V.
Van Pelt, John

Watkins, Charles W.
Westmoreland, M.
Welsh, James
White, Charles W.
Wotring, Benjamin F.
Whitmer, John
Williamson, John B.
Wilson, John
Wilson, James
Williams, V. Osceola